



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-4302

August 23, 2021

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Office of the Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20525

Dear Secretary Mayorkas:

As Members of Congress, we write to you with alarm and grave concern that military facilities, aircraft, and personnel are being used to house and transport an unknown number of COVID-positive migrants from the Texas border to bases and communities within the interior of Texas and the United States. While we understand the significant burden placed on border enforcement facilities and personnel due to increasing numbers of migrant encounters, we question the wisdom of undermining military readiness by exposing military personnel and our communities to untested and COVID-19 positive migrants.

The Delta variant of COVID-19 is spreading rapidly throughout the United States, and DHS has recognized increased rates of migrants testing positive for COVID-19. The COVID-19 positivity rate among migrants has become so severe that upwards of forty percent of those bussed to Laredo have tested positive for COVID-19. The city of Laredo is now refusing to accept migrants from other cities.

The Biden Administration has unnecessarily created a national crisis along the Southern Border that now requires an immediate and comprehensive “whole of government” effort to solve. However, without adequate COVID-19 testing and vaccinations for all migrants, we strongly urge the administration to end using military resources and consider reinstating a remain in Mexico policy. The potential drain on military and community resources and the additional costs resulting from increased COVID-19 infections presents a severe threat to military readiness and national security.

Of particular concern are migrants that are currently being housed at Fort Bliss in El Paso, Texas, and Joint Base San Antonio, Texas. Both Fort Bliss and Joint Base San Antonio alone are home to a military community of active duty, reserve, national guard, civilian, contractors, family members, and retirees totaling approximately 430,000 members. Both installations represent a significant amount of our nation’s combat power, military training resources, and other critical capabilities.

The increased threat of COVID-19 infections notwithstanding, the Biden Administration has opted to repurpose critical military assets for migrant transportation, processing, feeding, care, and housing. Unfortunately, there are minimal details available to Members of Congress regarding this operation, leaving us with a series of questions. We urge you to provide answers to the following:


1. What entity or entities within your organization have responsibility for coordinating, planning, directing, and conducting these operations with the Department of Defense?
2. What entity within the Department of Defense has responsibility for this operation?
3. How many migrants have been transported with military assets, and how many more are planned?
4. What is the total cost of transporting, housing, caring, and feeding migrants under this program since inception, and what are the anticipated future costs?
5. What is the funding source for the costs associated with this operation, and what budgeted funds were reprogrammed?
6. What military installations across the United States are currently being used to stage and transport migrants?
7. Of the migrants being housed, cared for, or transported to or from a military installation in the United States, how many have been tested for COVID-19, and what are the results?

It is self-evident this policy places the national security of our country, our military personnel, and their families at increased risk. The health, welfare, and readiness of our military should remain one of our highest priorities. We stand ready to work with your department to implement a comprehensive and workable solution to secure our Southern Border and end the increased risk to our military and country.

Sincerely,



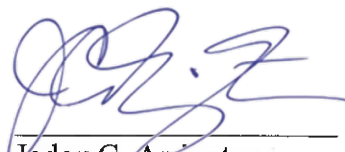
Troy E. Nehls
Member of Congress



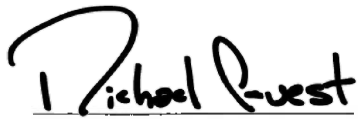
Louie Gohmert
Member of Congress



Bill Posey
Member of Congress



Jodey C. Arrington
Member of Congress



Michael Guest
Member of Congress



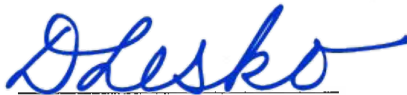
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